

August 2, 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR: NMSP Leadership Team

FROM: Karen Brubeck
Liz Moore
Chairs, National Advisory Council Options (NACO)
Working Group

SUBJECT: Discussion Paper for Leadership Team Meeting Session on
Options for a National Advisory Council

Background

Per the Leadership Team Meeting in California in January 2004, a working group was established to consider the need and options for a national advisory group. The working group, composed of Carol Bernthal, Nancy Daschbach, Andy Palmer, and us, first determined the needs for such a group:

- To provide a forum for the voice of national constituent and user groups; and
- To address issues and projects going beyond the scope of site-specific groups.

The working group has met three times via conference call, developed a list of the options available to the NMSP (attachment), and discussed the pros and cons of all those options, culminating in this recommendation for further discussion.

Recommendation

The NACO Working Group recommends the following:

1. Continue Option D, the Council of Chairs and the advice session of each year's Chairs and Coordinators Meeting.
2. Lay groundwork for Option B by preparing an appropriate charter and having everything ready in the event the NMSP does want to convene an advisory council but don't necessarily plan to convene one in the near future.
3. Investigate uses of Option F. At a minimum, the NMSP should be aware of what topics the MPA Center's FAC will be addressing and how such advice might impact the NMSP.
4. Consider implementing Option G, as resources allow, to provide a forum for national discussions, even if consensus advice cannot be obtained.

Discussion

Options A, C, and E were considered and then removed from consideration because of the numerous concerns outlined in Attachment 2, as well as the increased support that would be necessary for their operation. The combination of Options B (partial), D, F (partial), and G as outlined above most expeditiously addresses the needs outlined in Attachment 1. Maintaining the Council of Chairs meeting will continue to provide a venue for the NMSP to obtain site –based feedback on national issues and projects, while not inhibiting the operation or prestige of the local advisory councils. Establishing regularly-meeting roundtables would also provide a venue for constituent feedback on a national level. Laying the groundwork for Option B would ensure that if and when the NMSP feels the need to have consensus advice on a specific subject and has the necessary resources, it can quickly and temporarily convene a national advisory council. Providing enhanced coordination with the MPA Center and its FAC will keep the NMSP abreast of developments and opportunities; the NMSP currently has a staff person assigned to this role.

There are a few other considerations to keep in mind. The NMSP has been steadily but in a piecemeal fashion increasing the amount of support and coordination provided to advisory councils at both the site and national level. However, we feel we've reached a point where we need to conduct a rigorous assessment of the long-term needs for both the local advisory councils and any national groups that might result from this effort. We hope to complete this assessment by the end of the calendar year.

Although the above is the recommendation of the working group at this time, we believe this topic is important enough to warrant revisiting in the next three years. By then, our reauthorization will be complete, the regional organization will be in place, each site should have its own council up and running, and we will have conducted the support assessment and have a better idea of what will be necessary for present and future needs. Also, by that time, a response to the report from the Ocean Commission will also have been formulated and implemented, including the potential for regional advisory bodies.